

EDITORIAL

The A.M.A. Meeting

ONCE AGAIN the American Medical Association has completed the current version of what has come to be known as the "greatest medical meeting on earth," the Annual Session. And once again new records were set in attendance and number of exhibits in this the largest and probably best scientific medical meeting ever held.

More than 56,000 registrants attended the meeting. They attended outstanding symposia, reports of recent research and reviewed some 700 scientific and industrial exhibits, many of which captivated not only physicians but the nation's press in their display of imagination, ingenuity and technical and professional skill. Modern therapy encompasses so many skills that each new development of technique and equipment necessarily engages the attention and admiration of those who view it.

On the business side of the meeting, the House of Delegates considered 115 resolutions and 28 reports, again a record number. The meetings and committee hearings of the House commanded the attention of the California delegation, which this year tied with New York in representation, having 18 delegates. Since the scientific developments of the meeting will be reported elsewhere in the months to come, the immediate concern of members of the California Medical Association should be with the decisions of the House of Delegates.

These decisions were most pleasing to the California delegates in that they followed the lines of various proposals emanating from the C.M.A. meeting earlier this year.

This was particularly true in the case of the proposed integration of the medical and osteopathic professions in California. Three resolutions on this subject came before the House of Delegates, as did the report of the Judicial Council of the A.M.A. and a second report from a special committee that was

set up two years ago to provide liaison with the American Osteopathic Association.

The liaison committee reported, in effect, that it saw no chance for progress in its dealings with the national osteopathic committee, that its work was done and it should be discharged and that any decisions on the parallelism or differences in medicine and osteopathy must be decided by the House of Delegates. The reference committee reviewing this report accepted these recommendations.

The reference committee then went further and adopted a statement of policy with regard to osteopathy; this statement was then approved by the House of Delegates.

This statement, which fits in closely with the philosophy followed in California in recent agreements with the California Osteopathic Association, points out that there has been a transition in osteopathy over the years and that today in many areas osteopathic medicine and surgery follows accepted medical lines and that the differences between the two professions have been largely eliminated. Where this has occurred, the statement holds, proper evaluation of similarities and differences should be made at state level. Where osteopathy has not made this transition, the established rules of ethical conduct must apply and must continue to proscribe voluntary professional association with those who are still considered to be cultists.

In the words of the statement, "The test now should be: Does the individual doctor of osteopathy practice osteopathy or does he in fact practice a method of healing founded on a scientific basis? If he practices osteopathy, he practices a cult system of healing and all voluntary professional associations with him are unethical. If he bases his practice on the same scientific principles as those adhered to by members of the American Medical

Association, voluntary professional relationships with him should not be deemed unethical."

Here, for the first time, is a true guide which physicians may follow where the determination of cultism has not been made by the state association. Here is complete authorization for the California agreement to be consummated without fear or chance of criticism on ethical grounds.

Another committee report of great interest was that of a special committee which has worked for two years to strengthen the profession's disciplinary controls over its members. The report, accepted by the House, calls for original jurisdiction to be lodged in the A.M.A. when a member has violated the ethical principles, even though action may not have been taken against him in his own state. It also urges the use of county society committees as "grand juries" to initiate action against erring members. A further recommendation was that the medical schools develop and give courses in ethics and in socio-economic principles of medicine.

This set of recommendations, adequately applied, would be most valuable in preventing or stopping unethical acts by physicians who might feel free to dare the present disciplinary procedures.

In the field of communications, the House voted to establish a committee of seven of its members "to study and continually advise the Board of Trustees on the broad planning and coordination of all phases of communications. . . ." This came from a California resolution and met with approval from all quarters.

Another important resolution introduced by California called for establishment of a committee de-

signed to study and review the responsibilities of the A.M.A. Board of Trustees and to consider the advisability of enlarging the Board and altering the terms of office of trustees. A report will be given by this committee at the Denver meeting late in November.

These are some of the more important decisions reached in New York on California proposals. Actions on all business of the House of Delegates were printed in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* for July 10, 1961. A summary prepared by Ed Clancy, director of public relations of the California Medical Association, is printed in this issue of CALIFORNIA MEDICINE, beginning on page 123.

In its elections the House of Delegates selected Doctor George M. Fister of Ogden, Utah, as President-Elect. It filled three vacancies on the Board of Trustees with Doctors Wesley W. Hall of Reno, Homer L. Pearson of Miami and Charles L. Hudson of Cleveland, the last-named to fill an unexpired term by reason of death. Among the important council posts, two Californians were honored, Doctor Robertson Ward with reappointment to the Judicial Council and Doctor Dwight L. Wilbur with election to the important Council on Medical Education and Hospitals.

From a California as well as a national point of view, the decisions reached at the New York meeting were of great importance and most satisfying. Together, these decisions will help the medical profession along the way to the best in medical service for all people. California may well be proud that its representatives had such a large part in the conclusions reached.

